

Free essay on facing adversity in life changes one profoundly and significantly

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English

Thesis

Facing adversity in life changes one profoundly and significantly, and this is amply reflected through the writing of James Thomas Jackson (1993) in ‘Waiting in Line at the Drugstore.’ People go through a host of changes when faced with adversity, like overcoming fear, become witty, become wiser after learning from experience and so on. An autobiography, ‘Waiting in Line at the Drugstore’ reminiscence the young Jackson’s life and how his experience with dealing with adversaries transformed him into a well-read and knowledgeable man.

Introduction

“What changes occur to a person facing adversity in life?” is a question most of us would be able to recollect from experience. There is no denying the fact that we all have at some point of time in our lives, faced adversaries in various forms; it could have been when faced with the possibility of having to submit an assignment at short notice, or it could have been a situation

where you ran short of cash and didn't know how to pay your bills and so on. Whatever would have been the situation, we would have managed it somehow. This is precisely what happens when anyone faces adversaries. Most of the time, they are able to find a way to wriggle out of such uncomfortable situations unscathed. However, for young Jackson, the situation was far more serious than like the samples quoted above.

In 'Waiting in Line at the Drugstore,' Jackson (1993) reflects the above sentiments quite explicitly. As a black boy, Jackson, against his parent's wishes, dropped out of school, and had no other choice but to run simple errands a normal white boy would have found highly nonsensical. For young Jackson, life was a struggle. For a young black to go to a drugstore which was in a predominantly white neighborhood spelt trouble. There were rules that had to be obeyed and any black who broke these rules were, in the words of Jackson, "worked over something fierce, often by those mild-mannered Milquetoasts who looked as if they wouldn't hurt a fly" (Jackson, 1993). Hating what he did and with no other choice left, Jackson would head toward the drugstore every morning to pick up orders placed by his customers. He could have quit this job and gone back to school and in the process faced the wrath of his father, instead, he chose to continue with the job no matter what happened.

Young Jackson, even though he would have preferred the 'ghetto' as he claims it, put on a brave face and continued to go to the drugstore and wait in line till his name was called. As a rule, only after all the whites in the drugstore were attended to, would blacks get their chance to buy anything.

Therefore, it was customary that Jackson would have to wait for long to get his chance to buy things there. He would sit in one corner, far away from the glare of the whites in the drugstore. This continued for some time till one day, while waiting at the drugstore, Jackson accidentally noticed that he was in fact leaning against a bookcase that contained piles of books. At this point one shouldn't forget that Jackson had no affinity to reading and had left school just because of this. With nothing else to do, Jackson could only make up time wasted in waiting by reading or browsing through the line of books in the bookcase. He took a book and began to read it. Somehow, he took a liking for the book and began to use the time waiting by reading the book; reading pages after pages till his turn came. Slowly, the boy began to like the book and would make it a point to continue reading the book further. As days passed by, Jackson completed the book and took another book to read. This continued for long enough for Jackson to complete reading all the books in the bookcase. In that time, Jackson, who had an aversion of going to the drugstore, suddenly looked forward to his trip there every morning.

The waitress in the store had been following this black boy's activities with intent. One day, the waitress who would earlier call his name and hand over his order, gave him "with a sense of graciousness," his order which took the young Jackson by surprise. Unknowingly, he had won an admirer, most unintentionally. While young Jackson couldn't understand the waitress's behavior, it was obvious that the waitress had watched the black boy and his behavior and seen a different person stand before her than previously. This change of attitude must have warmed her heart and made her more affable toward the boy. This comes as no surprise, as at times, some of our own

actions are applauded without us knowing it. Young Jackson had turned his adversity, which was to wait till all the whites in the drugstore were attended to, into something more profoundly and significantly advantageous; he had become a well-read and knowledgeable individual, something that he would never have done had he run away from it.

A lesson to learn from 'Waiting in Line at the Drugstore' is that there are adversaries, but to shy away or hide from it in fear will only negate something that could profoundly and significantly change one's personality or character. Adversaries offer opportunities and it is for everyone to face it and witness the profound and significant changes that follow.

Conclusion

On a personal note, I remember as a child, I was frightened of the dark. The numerous stories I heard about ghosts and evil made me sweat in fear and this stopped me from going out after dusk. One day, my dad sensing that I was still acting immature as a boy, pushed me out of the house and made me sit all alone on the porch with the lights turned off. I cried out to mom to open the door but she wouldn't. After some time, my father came out and sat by my side. He looked at me and stared out into the darkness. He got up and walked down to the garden which was covered in darkness and after a while came back with a smile. He looked me in the eye and said, "See its nothing! There are no ghosts or demons out there in the dark; they are all in your mind. Remove them and you will see the night in a better perspective. If not for that experience, I would still have had some apprehension of traveling on my own at night. That incident changed my attitude and today, I

have no problem traveling alone on my own even after midnight. This is something I remember and will never forget for the rest of my life. Thus, as Jackson's attitude changed profoundly and significantly, mine did too when I was forced to face an adversary head-on.

Works Cited

Jackson, J. T, (1993), *Waiting in Line at the Drugstore and other writings of James Thomas Jackson*, University of North Texas Press, ISBN 0-929398-62-9
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